

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable consideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 3, 4, 6-10 and 12-24 are presently pending in this application, Claims 5 and 11 having been canceled and Claims 3, 6, 10, 12 and 23 having been amended by the present amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 3, 4, 9, 10 and 14 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by JP 2002-106988 (hereinafter “JP ‘988”); Claims 15-22 were indicated as allowed; and Claims 5-8, 11-13, 23 and 24 were indicated as allowable.

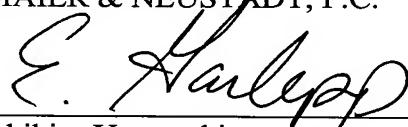
First, Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the indication that Claims 15-22 have been allowed and Claims 5-8, 11-13, 23 and 24 were indicated as allowed.

Accordingly, Claim 3 has been amended to incorporate the subject matter recited in Claim 5; Claim 10 to incorporate the subject matter recited in Claim 11; Claim 6 to depend from amended Claim 3; and Claims 12 and 23 to depend from amended Claim 10. As a result, Applicants respectfully request that Claims 5 and 11 be canceled without prejudice.

In light of the prior indication of allowable claims and in view of the amendments presented above, no further issues are believed to be outstanding, and the present application is believed to be in condition for allowance. If, however, the Examiner disagrees with any of the foregoing amendments, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned who will be happy to work in a joint effort to resolve remaining issues and expedite the prosecution of this application. Applicants respectfully request an early and favorable action to that effect.

Respectfully submitted,

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